



**Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Swaziland  
to the United Nations**

**Statement by**

**His Royal Highness Prince Hlangusemphi**

**Honourable Minister of Economic Planning and Development**

**Kingdom of Swaziland**

**At the**

**47<sup>th</sup> session of the**

**Commission on Population and Development**

**United Nations Headquarters**

**New York**

**7 April 2014**

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## Chairperson

May I start by congratulating you and the other members of Bureau on your election and state that my delegation and I look forward to a very fruitful session under your able guidance. We align ourselves with the statement delivered by Kenya on behalf of the African Group.

May I also thank the Secretary General for his thought provoking remarks and expressed commitment towards taking the issues emanating from the review of the progress of implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action forward beyond 2014. On behalf of The Swaziland Government, I wish to express our profound appreciation to the UN General Assembly for the decision to extend the ICPD indefinitely given that although significant progress has been made in the past 20 years towards the realization of the ICPD goals and objectives, a lot more still needs to be done. Let me also express deep gratitude to the UN and other organisations and national governments for the successful conclusion of the review of the implementation of the ICPD undertaken at global, regional and national levels. The findings of the review will inform the direction we will take as a global community given the commitments we made in Cairo, twenty years ago where we pledged to put people at the centre of development.

At this juncture may I underscore that the Kingdom of Swaziland has embarked on a number of initiatives towards the progressive realization of the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. I wish to re-iterate that whilst there has been significant progress in some areas, there is need for continuous, renewed and innovative efforts at all levels and across all sectors.

One of the notable achievements worth underscoring, is the coming into effect of the constitution in 2005 which provides for the Protection and Promotion of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms through the enshrined "Bill of Rights". Hence a rights based approach has been adopted and guides the formulation of development policies, plans and programmes. In the same vein, the country is fully committed to gender equality and women's empowerment and has ratified a number of regional, continental and international instruments as a demonstration of this commitment. These include the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development; the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa as well as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). On the legislative front, the country has enacted requisite laws to protect the rights of especially the most vulnerable members of our society. These include the: Girls and Women Protection Act; Maintenance Act; People Trafficking and People (Prohibition) Act and; Children's Protection and Welfare Act. The Domestic Violence and Sexual Offences Bill has just been passed by both houses of Parliament and awaits accent by His Majesty the King. The Marriage Bill which seeks to address the 'marital power' which bestows unequal power between spouses has been drafted and is awaiting approval.

In 2013, the country adopted for the first time, the National Policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), that is based on the fundamental principles of human rights and universal coverage to SRH information and services for all, who need them. This policy outlines among other things government's commitment to increasing access to comprehensive and age appropriate sexuality education for young people, ensuring that they have access to accurate information on sexual and reproductive health and rights related issues.

In addition the SRH policy further articulates the Swaziland's Government's commitment and obligations to reducing maternal mortality, addressing cancers of the reproductive system, as well as reproductive health and rights for the elderly. A National Confidential Enquiry Review into Maternal Deaths Committee that audits all reported deaths and provides guidance on corrective measures, has been established and each maternal death has been made a notifiable case. The country has adopted an integrated approach in addressing HIV and SRH as it has been proven that this strategy is effective in improving the health of the mothers and babies.

It is gratifying to share with you that the country has made commendable progress in the fight against HIV and AIDS and that indications are that the HIV prevalence rate is gradually declining. Significant progress has also been made towards the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV with 83% of pregnant women being tested for HIV and more than 95% of those testing positive receiving antiretroviral therapy by 2010. In 2012, Swaziland joined the relatively small number of low and middle income countries which have achieved universal access, that is, at least 80% of the country's population who need HIV treatment are receiving it. Research has shown that further increasing the coverage of people on ART and PMTCT contributes significantly to the reduction in new infections. The goal of getting to zero new HIV infections, zero AIDS related deaths and zero stigma and discrimination by 2015 remains our key driving force in the national HIV response. It is gratifying to note that the Government of Swaziland continues to prioritize health in the face of prevailing fiscal and economic challenges which have resulted in the country making significant progress in this sector.

At this juncture, may I underscore that the Government of Swaziland realises the critical importance of investing in young people and empowering them so that they become productive members of society. In this regard, the Government has introduced Free Primary Education as well as the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children's Fund to cater for the education of children in difficult circumstances up to high school level. As a result of these initiatives, the country has realized an increase in enrollment rates inspite of an increasing number of children being orphaned largely due to HIV and AIDS. In view of the fact that youth are the most affected by unemployment the Government of Swaziland has created a Youth Development Fund in an endeavor to develop their entrepreneurship skills and inculcate a culture of self-employment. Other youth empowerment initiatives include the 'Kick Start' and "Junior Achievers" which provide financial assistance and other means for the creation of development projects.

Let me at this juncture point out that we have encountered major challenges in our endeavor to achieve the goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action. First and foremost, the world financial and economic crisis has had an adverse impact on the domestic economy as manifest in the sluggish annual growth rate and the fiscal crisis. The volatile food and energy prices, food insecurity, as well as the challenges posed by climate change, have further aggravated the situation and curtailed the country's ability to invest in the economic and social sectors.

Secondly HIV and AIDS remains one of the major challenges our nation faces which has resulted in an unprecedented rise in child and maternal mortality levels and decline in life expectancy. This calls for a concerted effort towards addressing these challenges in partnership with our development partners.

Let me conclude by re-affirming the full commitment of the Government of Swaziland to the ICPD-Programme of Action and emphasising that we stand ready to work tirelessly towards achieving its goals and objectives. Towards this end, plans are underway to review our National Population Policy to enhance its relevance and effectiveness and ensure that it incorporates emerging issues in keeping with the national and global development agenda beyond 2015. I also wish to point out that my delegation and I note with satisfaction that the outcome of our deliberations will be presented to the Heads of State for consideration during a special session of the General Assembly on the ICPD, towards the end of the year. I am confident that during this session we will reach a consensus on how best to move forward and ensure that the population and development agenda is fully incorporated into the global sustainable development agenda beyond 2015.